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Preaching the Paschal Mystery

Dominic Rover, O.P.

Liturgical Spirituality

David Regan, C.S.Sp.

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The Next Step

At the second Christopher Study Week on Apostolic Renewal in the Seminary, Father Nebreda helped clarify some problems concerning adult mission catechetics. His suggestions should stimulate the thinking of young priests now experimenting with improvements in our inquiry classes.

Despite the enormous gains represented by the Catechetical Congress at Eichstatt in 1960, it left missionaries with some valid misgivings. Can you proclaim the kerygma to people without some previous preparation? Justifiable reservations of missionaries were thoroughly aired at the latest catechetical meeting at Bangkok in 1962. As a result of all this realistic study and discussion, Father Nebreda suggests that we deal with people journeying towards faith in three stages:

1. *Pre-evangelization.* In this stage we recognize the fact that many persons, because of their background, are unready for an abrupt proclamation of the good news. This is particularly true in the missions. But it is increasingly the case everywhere in our post-Christian era. "Pre-evangelization," says Father Nebreda, "is a stage of preparation for the kerygma which, taking man *as he is and where he is*, makes a human dialogue possible and awakens in him the sense of God, indispensable for opening the heart to the Message."

2. *Evangelization.* In this stage the religiously-awakened person is confronted with the basic core of the good news, proclaimed with all the power of apostolic witness. The goal here is a profound conversion of heart, entailing religious and moral consequences and a commitment to Christ our Lord and Savior.

3. *Catechesis.* Based on a sincere and profound interior change stirred by the kerygma, catechesis develops systematically the deeper content of the Christian message. The aim here is to confirm the original conversion, initiate the adult gradually into the Christian life and form a maturing Christian personality in grace and truth. Baptism follows.

Like most apostolates, work for conversions needs a thorough-going overhauling. Priests will make a lasting contribution who begin to apply imaginatively the hints offered by Father Nebreda.

JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

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Preaching the Paschal Mystery

Dominic Rover, O.P.

The Homily And The Renewal Of Preaching

It is clear that the revival of preaching which we have all been hoping for in our time has already one great new document to inspire, support, and direct it, namely, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. We should not neglect to say, of course, that the first Encyclical Letter of Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, is marvelously eloquent in its defense of preaching as "the primary apostolate." It marks out, too, in strong and accurate terms, the main lines of an authentic theology of preaching, commenting on the intrinsic power of the act of preaching; on the graces of speech that account for its unique power; on its relation to human eloquence; on its special fruit — which is faith or increase of faith; on its evangelical marks of simplicity and clarity; on its universality as a means of conversion and deeper communion.

Yet we turn to the *Constitution* with special interest and pastoral concern, because it is an actual charter of the preaching act as it is to be exercised in our time, especially within the liturgical celebration. In short, it has the wisdom and authority of law. It instructs bishop, pastor and priest-preacher how to preach.

How is he to preach? "With exactness

and fidelity," of course, for this is a great and demanding ministry. Whence is he to derive the doctrine he preaches in the liturgical assembly? From Holy Scripture and the liturgical texts: "The sermon, moreover, should draw its content mainly from scriptural and liturgical sources." What shall be the distinctive character of this preaching? It shall be kerygmatic: "Its character should be that of a proclamation of God's wonderful works in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ, ever made present and active within us, especially in the celebration of the liturgy." Salvation history and the mystery of Christ, especially the mystery of Christ within us: these are the two great subjects for liturgical preaching. Really one subject: Jesus Christ in His saving passage through time, Jesus Christ as He is now the healing and saving life of our souls, "ever made present and active within us." Earlier in the *Constitution* this subject is designated more particularly as "the paschal mystery," the mystery

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of "His blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension whereby 'dying, he destroyed our death and, rising, he restored our life.'"

The mandate, then, is very clear: our liturgical preaching, our homiletic preaching, is to be scriptural, kerygmatic, and centered on the paschal mystery. Out of a profound scriptural meditation on the paschal mystery, and in the midst of a ritual renewal of the paschal mystery, the priest-preacher is to proclaim the *paschal* mystery, and to proclaim it as a living reality being renewed here and now within the souls of the faithful, "the mystery of Christ ever made present and active within us."

EFFECT ON PREACHERS

It is difficult to estimate now what the effect will be of this clear-cut charter for homiletic preaching in our time, but certain reflexions are in order. First, consider the inevitable effect on the priest-preacher himself of the growing realization that this is the law for liturgical preaching as that law issues from the Second Vatican Council. It is the law; it is not merely eloquent though perhaps impractical speculation in an *avant garde* liturgical journal. What is the law? That along with the stunning changes in the ritual renewal of the paschal mystery there is to be a distinct change in the act of proclamation within the paschal ritual. This mystery is itself to be the constant subject of proclamation: the passage from life to death to life of Jesus Himself and of all those united to Him, especially that interior passage which takes place in time, now, in the souls of the faithful.

Secondly, and this follows from the change in the tone and matter of liturgical preaching, it appears that the priest-preacher must now become not merely the partisan and catechist of Christian creed, Christian code, Christian cult, and Christian culture. He must become, above all, the prophet of the one authentic mystery-religion, that of Jesus Christ. He must become, above all, a preacher of the Mystery, the unutterable Mystery of the Father's Love for us, in Jesus. This does not mean that the priest-preacher will not be called upon, even in liturgical preaching, to preach the distinct truths and precepts in Christian creed and

code and cult. Elsewhere in the *Constitution* we are instructed that "by means of the homily the mysteries of the faith and the guiding principles of Christian life are expounded from the sacred text, during the course of the liturgical year." This suggests a certain carry-over of the catechetical orientation of the decrees of Trent, and of the law and policy of the Church since the time of Trent. It suggests also the essential unity and harmony of all the mysteries as they are centered around the paschal mystery, so that the priest-preacher truly preaching the latter will not be neglecting the truths of dogma and moral which souls need in every time and place. Rather, he will be preaching them in a living form as they help souls to understand the mystery of Christ.

CENTRAL THEME

Yet for the priest-preacher the paschal mystery is not one among many mysteries; it is, so to speak, *the Mystery*, the source and center of liturgical preaching as it is the source and center of the liturgical action. For liturgical preaching is to be one with the liturgy as manifesting the very mystery celebrated in the liturgy—the paschal mystery of Jesus, His passage from life to death to life. His passage and *ours*, for the preaching of the homily, like the ritual event on the altar, is sign and cause of the mystical work of Jesus in souls as He brings about our death to sin and our resurrection to grace and to God. And since the ultimate effect, the fruit, the *res*, of both the celebration of the paschal mystery and the preaching of the paschal mystery is the life of Jesus in souls—His death renewed in my dying to sin, His resurrection renewed in my rising to grace—we may truly say that the chief subject for preaching in the new dispensation is the mystical life of Jesus in souls.

In terms of the motif of salvation history we may say that the preacher preaches the Great Event of Jesus' saving life, death and resurrection (plus all the events that went before, preparing and prefiguring the Great Event) as this Event is ordered to and efficaciously brings about the paschal event in souls: the death of the false self with its illusory pleasures, plans and purposes and the birth or "rising" within us of grace and

of the Spirit of Jesus Who is the soul of the Church and the soul of souls. As "the liturgy of the eucharist" celebrates ritually, and celebrating *causes*, this mystical death and transformation in Jesus, "the liturgy of the word" manifests it ever more clearly and urgently, *causing* it also in accordance with the charismatic character of sacred preaching, especially liturgical preaching.

We are faced here with the demands of harmony and unity between the liturgy of the eucharist and the liturgy of the word. What a pity it would be, what a loss for souls, if God's people were to share in a liturgy of the eucharist which truly celebrates and effects the paschal mystery while sharing in a liturgy of the Word which derives from a feeble and attenuated faith. At best, it reflects a kind of loyalty to Catholic ideals and to a militant sacramental life and, at worst, a hidden Pharisaism. In either case it gives a tragically diminished view of the destiny of the Christian soul. At any rate we know, and the law now states, that even this "best" is not enough; we must preach the paschal mystery, i.e., the hidden life of Jesus in souls.

INITIAL DIFFICULTY

Simple and practical this preaching must be, of course. We still operate within the limitations of the five or ten minute Sunday sermon, of an even shorter sermon where week-day preaching is the practice. Further, we preach to people who are just beginning to realize their true destiny in Jesus, if they realize it at all. We preach out of an ecclesiastical tradition that has long been pragmatic and polemical rather than contemplative and kerygmatic. And we preach in a psychological milieu (for preacher and hearer alike) still powerfully infected by Jansenism, naturalism, and pelagianism; a milieu most unfavorable, at first glance, to the doctrine of God's Merciful Love and to our own loving submission to the working out in our souls of the paschal mystery. Yet God has His ways.

The Church today seems to be saying: "Begin to preach this now, before—perhaps—you fully understand what you are preaching. You *will* understand. In principle you *do* understand, for you know the promises of Christ, you have read His Gospel, you have listened to the teaching of the

Church. Pray much and, whatever your limitations, preach the paschal mystery day in and day out. I will not have you remain a mere catechist, though now even my catechists are to be formed in an awareness of the paschal mystery. At any rate, preach, and do not offer my people stones when they ask for bread. Live the mystery, know the mystery, and teach them to know it and to live it. And be content for now with humble beginnings. Be content to do, in Jesus, what the Church has commanded you to do and beg Him for the light and strength you need to do it well." Such an approach, indeed, will be a guarantee of simplicity and practicality for the homily itself. For it will be the work of a humble preacher of the Gospel seeking out food for his children and proving his faith by leaving the results to God.

Yet the priest-preacher must not go forth unarmed. What are his resources as he undertakes the task of preaching the paschal mystery? The *Constitution* itself is helpful here, since it tells him to stay close to the scriptural and liturgical texts. It tells him, in effect, to search out the scriptures for evidences of the paschal mystery, implying the need for the kind of scriptural and liturgical meditation which will be sensitive to the proofs of God's Merciful Love, especially in the gift of Jesus Who is our life in the midst of death. For example, the liturgical texts for the twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost are filled with this spirit of faith and gratitude as the Christian soul experiences its deliverance from sin and death.

SUGGESTED APPROACH

In the First Lesson St. Paul articulates the paschal mystery with great simplicity and eloquence, speaking of "our Lord Jesus Christ" Who will "change our poor body into the likeness of his glorified body." In the Gospel Lesson two incidents, two miracles, two acts of life-giving mercy, are linked by Matthew: the raising of the ruler's daughter from death to life and the healing of the woman who had been bleeding from hemorrhage for twelve years. In both cases the human condition is seen as hopeless, the cure is instant and the disposition that is proportionate to the cure is that of loving faith and confidence. The Entrance

Song that introduces these great texts is, as always, lyrical and personal, filled with divine reassurances to the distressed soul: "I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction; you shall call upon me and I will hear you." Offertory and Communion are in dialogue: the soul says, in the former, "Out of the depths I have cried to you" and the Lord answers, in the latter, "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you shall receive these things and that they shall come to you." If you are in distress, believe, believe, cling to me in loving belief, and you will be saved.

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION

There is no great problem here of biblical or theological research; the paschal mystery is resonant in every word of the liturgical text. There is, first of all, the Gospel event, a two-fold bringing forth of life out of death by the touch of Jesus. There is St. Paul's careful commentary on the life-giving, transforming power of Jesus. There is the cry for mercy of the Christian soul, still captive and death-bound. There is God's comforting reply, the renewal of His promise to save. There is also, in the meditation song, the gratitude of the delivered soul: "You saved us, Lord, from our enemies; you put to shame them that hate us. In God we will glory all the day; giving praise to your name for ever."

As the preacher meditates on these texts, allowing them to come together naturally, to speak together, they speak out the paschal mystery in terms that are clear and true and utterly unforced. What other sense can be made of these texts except that Jesus is showing us that He is our life; that without Him we are dead or sick unto death; that He wills to heal us with a touch, lovingly, gratuitously; that the impress of that touch in us is faith; that the gift of union with Him through a living faith is salvation and joy and peace?

Or take the texts for the fourth Sunday after Pentecost. The Entrance Song sings out the paschal mystery immediately: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? My enemies that trouble me have themselves become weak and fallen." The tone is one of trust and triumph, the conquest of Jesus'

life over the enemy within. In the First Reading, from St. Paul, the conquest is one of patience and hope. In a great cosmic vision the Apostle sees all creation as groaning in its enslavement to vanity and corruption. "And not only creation but we, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves as we wait for the adoption as sons of God, the redemption of our body, in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In the Gospel event narrated in the Second Lesson—the barren fishing venture, then the miraculous abundant catch in obedience to the command of Christ—the paschal mystery is affirmed again. In the night of sin and ignorance and human impotence they "caught nothing." The unbelievable and fecund catch is the work of Jesus alone as they obey his word and "pay out the nets," for Jesus is Light, Life and Resurrection. And so we sing to Him in the Offertory: "Give light to my eyes that I may never sleep in death." No, there is never any need to fear that the liturgical texts will fail to yield up the new wine of the Gospel message or fail to reveal new insights into the paschal mystery.

STRUCTURE OF THE MASS

Apart from the special texts from the Proper of the Mass, the total textual structure of the Mass, in whole and in part, constantly adumbrates the paschal mystery. To take only one example, in the prayer immediately following the second Consecration priest and faithful recall to mind the exact sequence of paschal events as they occurred during the earthly sojourn of Jesus: "For this reason, O Lord, we your servants and likewise your holy people remember the blessed suffering of the same Christ, your Son, our Lord. We remember his rising from the abode of the dead and his going up to the glory of heaven." And the prayer continues with that marvelous new oblation of the one clean Victim Who is Jesus Himself. "Mindful of all this, from among the gifts you gave us we offer to your radiant majesty a victim pure, holy, spotless, the sacred bread of life eternal, the cup which gives salvation forever." Through living contact with the "pure, holy, spotless" Victim the paschal mystery shall be achieved in us.

In the words of the *Mediator Dei*, "All

the elements of the Liturgy . . . reproduce in our hearts . . . the likeness of the Divine Redeemer. . . . Thus, we become a victim, as it were, along with Christ to increase the glory of the Eternal Father." The priest-preacher who lives with these texts, in the Mass and in his meditation outside of Mass, is feeding his soul with the bread of the paschal mystery. And as in the eucharistic transformation he will become, through loving meditation on the scriptural and liturgical texts, like the very object of his meditation Who is Christ Himself, the Paschal Lamb.

To the resources of scriptural and liturgical meditation which the priest-preacher needs in order to preach well the paschal mystery, we must add, of course, the personal living of this mystery and the loving knowledge which is the fruit of that experience. If it is true that in the new dispensation the preacher is now called upon to be more prophet than catechist, it follows that he needs a prophetic awareness of the needs of souls. As all love for others is measured by a true or false love for self ("Love your neighbor as yourself") so a truly perceptive and efficacious knowledge of the needs of souls is measured by the experience of one's own needs.

How poor, then, will be the inner resources of the priest-preacher who does not recognize in his own life the working out of the paschal mystery. He will be preaching a kind of theological fable, which he accepts, which he believes in, which he reads about, but which has no resonance within his own soul. If belief or fullness of belief is the crucial need of the priest-preacher in any time or place or with respect to any kind of preaching, then the specific preaching of the paschal mystery calls for a certain fullness of belief with regard to this mystery itself as it is taking place in souls, and especially in the soul of the preacher himself.

In the end it is a matter of grace. It is not without grace, it is normally not without abundant grace, that souls become aware of their personal need to be saved by Christ. It is not without abundant graces of self-knowledge that souls know they are dead without Him, yet in Him filled with His very life. It is not without abundant graces that the priest-preacher can enter fully into the paschal mystery himself, so

as to preach a resonance that is lively and personal and supernaturally persuasive. Humble beginnings, yes, but where is the priest-preacher to go at last to know what it is that he is preaching, especially when he is commanded to preach the mystery of our life and death in Christ? He must go to the Source; he must go beyond Scripture to the Author of Scripture; he must go to Life in order to live out the paschal mystery in union with Jesus, for the Spirit alone knows what deaths we must die and when and where we are to rise again.

URGENT NEED

The command is clear enough and, no doubt, the Church will be patient, for the Church cannot imperate or control the inner dynamism of the paschal mystery in the souls of its members, not even in the souls of its priest-preachers. Yet there are needy souls in the Body of Christ, souls who cannot wait, who need right now to know their destiny in Christ, who need to enter wholly and knowingly into the paschal mystery in order to survive; certainly in order to grow in God's love. To these needy souls especially the preacher is sent. He belongs to them and they belong to him. And they will know him not only by the objective truths he preaches but by the very sound of his voice, so to speak; by the almost tangible presence in him of the mystery he preaches to them. They will hear or they will not hear, in him, their own cry for liberation. They will recognize or they will not recognize, in him, the living reality of the paschal mystery which they are living through but which they do not fully understand.

Standing in the midst of the liturgical assembly he mediates the Mystery to the same hungry souls who will receive the Mystery later, in its sacramental form, in the liturgy of the eucharist. And this is the way it must be. It is not enough for us, for any of us, to try to live through the paschal mystery like blind men, like dumb beasts who know nothing of God's ways. The preacher of the Mystery is not a luxury in the Church or in the liturgical assembly. He is bread and water and wine of hope, hope for the light we need to know and to embrace "the mystery of Christ ever made present and active within us."

Liturgical

Spirituality (1)

David Regan, C.S.Sp.

Basic Elements In Christian Formation

No easy task faces anyone who has to teach a theology of the spiritual life and who is at all aware of the lively currents of thought rejuvenating the Church at present. The task resembles that faced a generation ago by forward-looking teachers of Scripture, Liturgy and Catechetics. These latter disciplines have by now arrived at some sort of stable state, and there are the text-books at hand which make the task of the ordinary teacher no longer heroic and which in conservative circles confer on the new ideas the respectability of having 'arrived'.

Spiritual theology is a long way behind, it is still very much 'on the way'. The new materials furnished by the renewal in biblical and other studies have not yet been worked into a synthesis and meantime both teachers and pupils who have scented the fresh fruits of this new look at the sources of revelation will find the existing ascetical text-books arid to traverse.

Has the spirituality at present in ferment anything more than a heady newness to recommend it? After all, for the most part it is novices or seminarians who in fact follow set courses in 'Ascetical Theology' and the authorities responsible for guiding their steps are understandably concerned that only solid and reliable Catholic teaching form the speculative basis of their religious or clerical lives. Is there something of per-

manent value in the spirituality suggested by the new advances in biblical and liturgical theology and if so can we pin-point the new riches?

The most important contribution of the new approach is its unique preoccupation with what is central in Christianity rather than with what is peripheral. Preoccupation with what is central is due largely to keeping close to the biblical and liturgical sources of Christian belief and Christian life. Keeping close to the centre of Christian life—to the Mystery of Christ relived in his Church—gives a unity of outlook which sees the apparently opposed contemplative-apostolic; doctrinal-moral; liturgical-devotional; individual-social; ecclesiastical-mundane, aspects of Christian living embraced in one powerful and dynamic whole. This wide view and all-embracing scope make for a spirituality which is for all Christians; for the layman as much as for the cleric.

Emphasis on essentials sees Christian living rooted in our baptismal union with Christ and concentrates on that, seeing other obligations and commitments as bound up with diversity of function in that fundamental 'life in Christ'. This emphasis is timely because disproportionate stress on the priesthood or on religious consecration has in the past given the impression that the gap between priest and layman was greater

than that between the Christian and pagan.

Religion as presented by the Bible and lived in the liturgy is social—disconcertingly so for many. The death and resurrection of Christ as the central mystery of God's mercy to man is seen as prepared in Israel of old and prolonged in the Church. In relation to Christ men are treated first as a social entity—the People of God—and only later are individuals considered. The relation of the individual to Christ is primarily that of a member of the whole; death through Adam is paralleled by life in Christ. The primacy of charity amongst those who are so closely joined as members of Christ, recipients of God's love, becomes obvious, as does the supreme importance of membership of Christ as compared with any lesser distinction.

The biblical perspective—the revelation of God's mercy and love in Christ—opens the way to a spirituality dominated by thanksgiving and joy, one filled with hope and the light of Easter. Sin and death have already been conquered in Christ's passage from death to life and our religion consists in living with joy and thankfulness the new life of those risen with Christ through baptism. Morality is not first; sin is not first, but God's love revealed in Jesus Christ. Worship of God through the liturgical reliving of the mystery of our salvation is our first Christian task.

JOY IN VICTORY

Our worship is a commemoration and a thanksgiving for goodness so great and benefits so rich that only the rite designed by Our Lord, in which the Church's offering mingles with his own, can adequately express it. The joyful atmosphere of the eucharistic celebration of Christ's victory is the keynote of genuine Christian living. It is because we are risen with Christ that we must seek the things that are above in preference to those of earth. Christian living, involving this constant choice painful to human flesh, is a sharing in Christ's cross as well as in his resurrection, but it is *Christ's* cross and *his* resurrection and no mere 'moral athleticism' on our part. Christ's resurrection marked the victory of the Spirit over the flesh and our Christian living is a radiating of that victorious spirit; in a sense our lives are a continued celebration of Christ's victory over sin and over death.

In Our Lord's command of charity, above all, is this seen. Real love of one man for another is so opposed to the flesh that it is a proof to all men that here there is something divine at work. There is something healthy about this 'asceticism' which has all its arrows pointing towards Christ rather than towards the individual's soul; the centre of gravity is where we feel it should be. The realization that Christ is the unique source of all salutary influence, of all virtue and conquering of sin, leads not to despondency but to confident prayer. Stress from the beginning on the fact that our moral living is a *result* of our life in Christ more than its cause makes humility fit into its right place. Viewing our religion habitually from the objective standpoint of the central mystery of Christ is already a 'mystical' rather than an 'ascetical' way of viewing it—it is the way that Scripture and earliest catechesis present it, even to beginners.

VITAL CENTER

Preoccupation with what is central in Christianity is the great strength of contemporary theology. It is due to its primarily pastoral aim. So far from being a dilettante toying with ideas or an over subtle refining of established notions the best of present-day Catholic thinking is devoted to thorough study of the fundamentals of our faith. This study gains a seriousness from the Church's situation in the world today and is in a sense an outcome of that situation. The theology is not for that reason necessarily superficial or of the passing nature of a palliative any more than were the doctrinal advances of the past when occasioned by the combating of heresy or error.

This concrete pressure of error or circumstance has cradled as much of Catholic theology as has the dispassionate calm of unhurried study. In the past, theology may have suffered from the efforts of practical men who hoped that an accommodating formula or casuistic nostrum might ease men's burdens; the theologian today has a different task. The present problems of the

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Church run deeper. It is not disputes about efficacious grace or rules of thumb for deciding one's conscience which divide men and harass them. The roots of revealed religion itself under attack and the shrinking face of Christianity in a growing universe make the need for presenting our religion as a whole more and more pressing. The reshaping of details of Christian teaching has given way to the examination of its most fundamental tenets.

POST-CHRISTIAN ERA

Intelligent Christians in those areas where Catholic intellectual life has been strong and where at the same time the non-Christian character of the present-day world has confronted the Church quite starkly, have realized that for the first time in a thousand years the Church has to be presented to a world which does not know it. In so far as those baptized in infancy are 'of the world' until their 'post baptismal catechumenate' is accomplished, they too cannot be expected to have an explicit grasp of all that the Church stands for. In the Christian centuries the local community knew what Christianity was; the overall grasp of religious values of that community was accurate enough. As a member of such a community the individual Christian could get by with conscious advertence to only a few aspects of religion, sometimes to very secondary ones. Not so today. The difference is seen in those who pass from a sheltered 'old-world' community to a modern industrial city. The winnowing occasions either a maturing of explicit faith or a capitulation in the face of religion suddenly become a vital problem of personal commitment, with the group-support withdrawn.

The dynamic areas of the Church today are alive to *the necessity for each Christian to rely habitually and normally on what is objectively central and basic in Christianity*. Prayer and devotional tastes as well as formal instruction must become not merely orthodox but must be fed as deeply as possible from the central founts of our faith. Emphasis on fundamentals has produced, or at least reinforced, the modern biblical movement; fidelity to the living Church of today urges us to respect this revival and to find at the sources of revelation the deepening of our faith which a spiritual theology implies. Bib-

lical studies have been going deeper than verbal exegesis, they reveal the central themes which run through the whole of Scripture. Modern catechesis, building on this foundation, is attempting to employ in its task as far as possible the privileged presentation of Christianity given by divine choice in revelation.

Study of the leading currents of thought in the Bible sees them combine to form what has been called the 'history of salvation'. In that revealed context of the divine activity one moment appears as central; this is the redemptive mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. It is on this 'Paschal Mystery' that all revelation is ultimately focused and it is in terms of this mystery alone that it can be understood. The realization on the part of biblical scholars that this mystery has a central place in revelation is backed by liturgical and patristic scholarship. From the point of view of the whole of Scripture the Paschal Mystery of Our Lord's death and resurrection is seen as the supreme example of God's merciful dealings with his people and around that centre all his other merciful interventions are seen to revolve—from the choice and liberation of the Israelites to the Church and the sacraments.

TRADITIONAL SUPPORT

Liturgical studies bring evidence to bear on the same point and show how the early centuries of Christianity stressed the central mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. The centuries of struggle to enlighten the pagan world were also the centuries which formed our Catholic liturgies and, rightly understood, these liturgies, just as the early missionary preaching, place unequivocal emphasis on the central position of the Easter Mystery. It is not by chance that the decades in which scholars have been showing the preponderant role of the resurrection in the New Testament have led to the restoration of the liturgy of the Easter Vigil and of Holy Week.

The liturgy is the Church's own school of spirituality. In the liturgy Scripture, sacramental life and prayer are blended in a living whole which can be assimilated truly only in act rather than by speculative study. That privileged fount of Christian life always keeps the correct balance in its prayer. This is seen to advantage in its high point,

the liturgy of Holy Week. Celebration of the victory of Christ — a feast of light and joy — is the principle theme, sounded first on the Second Sunday of the Passion and not lost entirely to view even on Good Friday. Throughout it is Christ's mystery which is celebrated, but that mystery is the supreme Act of God's mercy to man in which our salvation is accomplished.

The mystery as shared in by man is celebrated chiefly in the concrete rite of baptism where the child of Adam is plunged into the saving waters of Christ's death and comes forth in newness of life to live henceforward a Christian. Christian morality is seen not as the centre of our religion but as required by our sharing in Christ's risen life. In this reliving of Christ's mystery which is Holy Week the living truth is proclaimed and offered for acceptance in ever deeper faith. It is Christ who is offered, living in the most vital act of his Church and proclaimed anew in the privileged setting in which his Mystical Body is ever renewing itself in charity.

UNIFIED OUTLOOK

The value of the 'discovery' of the central mystery of Christianity could scarcely be exaggerated. Being central, everything depends on it and at last it is possible to glimpse all the aspects of Catholic practice and teaching radiating from their centre and to hope that patient pondering of that mystery will lead to a work of synthesis in which present antinomies will be more fully resolved. Spiritual theology will gain immeasurably from this unified outlook. No longer is it sufficient to treat of grace, prayer, virtue in so many compartments without explicitly deriving them from the mystery of Christ. No longer may bible-reading be given a paragraph in a thousand pages. Rather should we begin with the revealed history of Salvation and, taught by the liturgical use of Scripture, see the interventions of God's mercy in the world that we may open our hearts to his action in the Church today.

An ascetical theology which would simply be an extension of the moral theology of a generation ago is no longer sufficient. The central Mystery of Christ must first be preached before the Christian life can be seen in true perspective. 'Must be preached'

I say, because the task belongs to the preaching mission given by Christ. It is a proclaiming of the good news of salvation and that proclamation, even to novices or clerics, is itself an 'event' in the history of salvation. No mere intellectual exercise is involved, but a coming of the kingdom of Christ's glory — an offer of mercy and faith before which the hearer cannot remain unchanged, but either accepts and grows in faith or rejects and draws back from Christ.

VIRTUE OF HOPE

Hope is the Cinderella of the theological virtues, but it comes into its own in the biblical view of the Christian life. The triumph of the Spirit over the flesh was manifested in Christ's resurrection when sin and death were defeated, the Christian's baptismal share in that victory is the basis for his hope. Though in this life victory over sin and death can only be partial, nevertheless hope is firm; it is anchored in the glorified Christ our Head whose ascension to glory is the pledge that we his members will follow him. The notion that hope is a pale wish to attain to God is an attenuation probably due to fear of the Reformers' '*fides fiducialis*'. The New Testament gives much more ground for emphasizing the '*firmitas expectationis*'. The attitude of grateful acceptance of God's mercies in Christ is typical of the Christian life. It anchors the Christian so firmly in Christ that as long as he remains a member of that Body his share in the glory of the head is assured. The sermon of St. Leo the Great for the feast of the Ascension, read in the Breviary, makes this point so well that we see that the Ascension could be called the feast of Christian hope.

Hope as described in the Bible is social, not only in the sense that here on earth the whole Church together prays and lives in hope, especially in the liturgy, but that the ultimate fulfillment of all the Christian's hopes and desires is an event in the history of salvation which has reference to the whole Church and to all mankind — the Second Coming of Christ. This Coming of Christ, terrible for those who have knowingly rejected him, will bring fullness of salvation to those who have surrendered to his mercy. The apostolic preaching, the Epistles and the Gospel parables are full

of this eschatological hope. The number of parables interpreted by the Fathers as referring to the Second Coming but given in more recent times a devotional application only to the death of the individual, reminds us that objectivity in spiritual theology may involve an apparent loss at first.

An important item of balance contributed to spirituality by current theology is that, based on the inspired presentation of religion, it insists on putting God first. Too long has our spirituality started from notions of the perfecting of the individual. Once started on that track everything is distorted. Grace, Christ's mysteries, contemplative prayer, are seen from below and as centered on man. At every step there is emphasis on the need for correction and the impression that religion is a personal affair becomes unavoidable. If one starts from the redemptive Mystery of Christ, as does the Holy Week liturgy, the priority of the Church over the individual member becomes evident and the social nature of every Christian act shines out. The apostolate is seen in its natural place as the tendency of the Body of Christ to grow and the consequent urging of charity to bring others to drink at the source of mercy. It would seem that a full spirituality should be able to see apostolic activity as a normal part of Christian living and not in any way as a burden distracting from self-perfection.

MATURE FAITH

It is a commonplace observation that in countries of long-standing Catholic traditions, religion tends to be looked on as an affair for women and children but as unworthy of men. This may at times be only too true, in as much as the version of the faith currently presented to the people stresses the sentimental and balks at preaching the austerity of a more pure faith — the type of statues and pictures so often employed is indicative of the outlook. Something similar is encountered in spiritual theology. The symbolism of the Bible and the liturgy is restrained and slightly abstract in its universality and broadness of scope. It is concerned with Jesus Christ and his saving work and takes all men and all times into its view. This may make some demands on the beginner, though it has poetic aspects too. If this biblico-liturgical imagery is not

employed, then spirituality tends to vacillate between less authentic religious imagery of an individualistic and consequently sentimental nature, on the one hand, and over-abstract technical theological languages on the other. The symbolism of the Bible can be penetrated ever deeper by an increasingly pure faith. When growing up in Christ leads to the maturing of faith, no intellectual adjustments are called for and the same images and symbols may serve, unaltered, a deeper and less childish faith.

What might thus be avoided is some sort of local modernism where beginners, because they are emotional, are fed a diet of sentimental spirituality and their ready emotions too easily catered for — just what St. John of the Cross warns against in prayer. When a more mature faith leads to the evaporating of sentiment there arises a feeling of repugnance for the devotions and images whose theological content was never very great and which cannot now be deepened without many reserves and often radical correction. More respect, from the beginning, for the objective picture of a whole Christianity might save the crisis of maturing faith from being unnecessarily acute.

ENDURING MESSAGE

The spiritual theology whose outlines have been suggested here does not seem to be the passing theory of this or that school of spirituality. Certainly many details are not worked out and time will see many points modified or abandoned, but in the main there is the really important fact of a new understanding of the unified view which was that of the apostolic preaching, and the faith of the early Church. The need for presenting Christianity as a whole is clearly realized and, more important still, the unity which that wholeness of view demands is no longer left to the inventiveness of the individual pedagogue, but is the unity discovered in the revealed message itself.

This converging of scriptural, liturgical and patristic theology on one powerful central theme may well prove the most important theological advance for many centuries. Its practical, pastoral repercussions are full of promise and the Church has accepted as her own all its chief conclusions. The *Constitutio de Sacra Liturgia* of the Second Vatican Council, though primarily a pas-

oral document of a pastoral Council, states time and time again the central position of Christ's 'Paschal Mystery'. Though dealing directly with the liturgy, the Council speaks of the relation of Christ's mystery to many aspects of Christian life and piety.

The care of the Council for consistency and harmony in its various sections makes it not easy enough to infer what line it must take when it comes to deal with these related matters. The Council uses the expression 'the Mystery of Christ', seeing Our Lord's redemptive work as a whole. Singling out the principal aspects of that mystery it states that the work of human redemption and the perfect glorification of God was carried out by Our Lord chiefly in the Paschal Mystery of his passion, resurrection and ascension. This mystery was prefigured in the merciful interventions of God in the Old Testament and saw the birth of that wonderful sacrament which is the Church.

It is the Paschal Mystery of the triumph and victory of Christ's death which is celebrated in the Eucharist and from that Paschal Mystery the sacraments derive all their efficacy. It is Our Lord's death and resurrection, liberating us from sin and the

devil and introducing us into the kingdom of the Father, that the apostles were commissioned to proclaim. By their sacramental ministry they were to realize that saving work amongst men. It is baptism which first inserts men into that Paschal Mystery. It is the liturgy, especially the Mass, which in the highest degree brings it about that men live the Mystery of Christ and show it forth to others. All missionary activity and all the Church's works are directed to the praise of God in the eucharistic sacrifice and to the living of the Eucharist in charity. It is from the liturgy as from their source that all the Church's sanctifying activities spring forth. The Mystery of Christ and the history of salvation are the centre of unification around which the teaching of dogmatic theology, sacred scripture, spiritual and pastoral theology should revolve. The chief homiletic materials which should be drawn from Scripture and the liturgy are the merciful interventions of God in sacred history and the Mystery of Christ. The homily should show these as living now, especially in the celebration of the liturgy. The Paschal Mystery, celebrated each Sunday and in a special way at Easter, is the chief theme of the Church's year.

(To be continued)

When I read the Gospel and find there testimonies from the Law and from the Prophets, I see only Christ; I so see Moses and the Prophets that I understand them of Christ. Then when I come to the splendor of Christ Himself, and when I gaze at that glorious sunlight, I care not to look at the lamplight. For what light can a lamp give when lit in the daytime? If the sun shines out, the lamplight does not show. So, too, when Christ is present, the Law and the Prophets do not show. Not that I would detract from the Law and the Prophets; rather do I praise them in that they show forth Christ. But I so read the Law and the Prophets as not to abide in them but from them to pass to Christ.

St. Jerome

Certificate of Profession of Faith



This is to Certify

That _____

Child of _____

and _____

Born in _____

on the _____ day of _____ 19 _____

Baptized in the _____ Church

of _____

on the _____ day of _____ 19 _____

***made a Solemn Profession of Faith in the
Roman Catholic Church***

on the _____ day of _____ 19 _____

at the Church of _____

in the presence of _____

and _____

***and was admitted to the Sacraments and Communion
of the Roman Catholic Church.***

(Seal)

Dated: _____

Signed: _____

Books Received

Maturity in the Religious Life

John J. Evoy, S.J. and

Van F. Christoph, S.J.

Sheed and Ward. \$4.95

No section of the Church has undertaken a more far-reaching self-reform than our communities of religious women. This is encouraging in view of their vast actual and potential influence. While this phase of agiornamento must ultimately be accomplished by the Sisters themselves, they can be aided by the assistance of informed, sympathetic suggestions from priests and laity.

This book will be welcomed heartily by sisters and can be of immense help in the renewal on which they have embarked. In a previous volume, *Personality Development in the Religious Life*, the writers established themselves as thoroughly knowledgeable and balanced in their approach. It was received warmly by numerous sisters.

The present book is a follow-up study, carrying their theme into the deeper aspects of maturity in the life of religious. It grew out of seminars they conducted for a considerable number of religious communities whose sisters offered suggestions out of their own personal experience. The book manifests an awareness of the new status of women, and the need of developing responsible independence within the context of enduring religious principles and the actualities of Catholic life and apostolate today. It can be recommended not only to sisters, but to priests and laity with whom they are now laboring more closely and responsibly.

Apostolic Renewal in the Seminary

Edited by James Keller and

Richard Armstrong.

The Christophers. 50c each.

This is an invaluable book by reason of its purpose, rich content and the high standing of the writers of its various chapters. It contains the contributions of the eminent priests who participated in the Second

Christopher Study Week held in New York, July 1964. A digest of significant conclusions from the First Study Week in 1963 is included.

These study weeks were called by the Maryknoll Fathers Keller and Armstrong under the auspices of *The Christophers* to pursue in ever-increasing depths the agiornamento needed in our seminaries. There is incontestable urgency for an adequate spiritual and intellectual formation of seminarians if they are to present the gospel vitally and if they are to inspire the laity.

This volume makes a shining contribution to the accomplishment of this great objective. There is neither a dull nor an irrelevant page in the entire book. In some twenty one chapters, many of the outstanding elements of seminary training are discussed. Spiritual development, apostolic formation, the growth of a genuine seminary community all get keen and balanced treatment. Particular disciplines like scripture, the various aspects of moral and dogma, liturgy, homiletics, the parish, and catechetics are all considered with a view to the needs of our time.

The speakers, from America or abroad, include notables like Myles M. Bourke and Avery Dulles, Jerome Hamer and Bernard Häring. There is even a chapter on Protestant efforts in the same field. *Anyone* interested in seminaries should not neglect this remarkable book.

The Epistle to the Romans

(Theological Meditations)

Karl Herman Schelkle, S.J.

Herder and Herder. \$4.95

Every word written by St. Paul is of priceless worth and interest. But his letter to the Romans is of particular significance. One of the longest of his epistles, it is the fruit of his maturing reflection and experience. A sentence in Romans launched St. Augustine on the journey that led to his

total conversion. And study of St. Paul's teachings on justification by faith deeply influenced Martin Luther. Even among the inspired writings, the wide influence of this book is notable and lasting.

Employing the readable translation of Rev. Joseph I. Lilly, C.M., Father Schelkle divides the epistle into sections based on the thought of St. Paul rather than by the customary chapter divisions. Matters that are clear are touched upon briefly, but obscure or profound parts receive more extensive comment. Each section is summarized and notes enrich the reader's understanding with pertinent historical information.

In the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul is more systematic in the development of his themes. Here, Paul the theologian and missionary imparts some of his richest teaching on God's saving justice, man's infidelity, and our ineffable salvation in Christ. It is here, too, that he dwells on the place of Israel in God's plan. And in offering advice on composing the understandable differences between those of Jewish or Gentile backgrounds, he gives us invaluable glimpses into the problems of the early Church.

Father Schelkle is a noted scriptural scholar, professor of Scripture at the Catholic Theological faculty of the University of Tübingen. He guides the reader skillfully through an epistle that would otherwise be difficult reading.

Kingdom of Heaven
(The Good Tidings of the Gospel)
Augustine Stock, O.S.B.
Herder and Herder

Employing the concept of the Kingdom of Heaven, so often on the lips of our Lord, the author unifies and explains many of the major elements of the gospel. The parables, the beatitudes and the last things which usher in the definitive kingdom—all come in for illuminating discussion.

The author begins with the oral proclamation of the good news. He pursues the somewhat complicated process by which the kerygma came to be written in the four gospels. From this study there emerges a group of principles which he applies to a consideration of the beatitudes. Thus the way is paved for understanding apparent discrepancies in the different gospel accounts and

the varying re-interpretation. Insight is also given into a variety of levels of meaning and into the theological sections of the beatitudes inspired by the Spirit.

He next moves into the area of the parables, a section of the scriptures on which we assuredly need the assistance of modern scriptural scholarship. One could wish for a more extensive treatment than we find here, but the author does add greatly to our understanding of how and why the originals came to be re-interpreted.

The writer devotes considerable attention to the difficult question of eschatology. Because of the complexity of the matter itself and the variety of opinions concerning it, he summarizes and gives a critical interpretation of the theories of many scriptural scholars like Schweitzer, Dodd and Cullman. Father Stock then offers suggestions for a sound approach to Christian eschatology. The author has a gift for clear, expository writing which makes this an enjoyable readable book.

J. T. M

GUIDE

- A publication of the Paulist Institute for Religious Research.
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GUIDE

411 West 59th Street
New York 19, New York

Guide Lights

THE CERTIFICATE OF PROFESSION OF FAITH . . .

The Certificate reproduced on page 14 of this current issue is available for order. The cost of these is \$2.00 per hundred. Some suggestions have been received from parishes and chanceries about the wording, and others are welcome. We hope that eventually some such certificate will find general acceptance in Catholic parishes and help obviate the practice of wholesale conditional baptism.

A PARISH CATECHUMENATE EXPERIMENT . . .

Every once in a while somebody comes up with a good idea which he has actually worked out in practice. One such experiment in a parish inquiry program recently came to my attention.

Visitation parish is in Detroit's inner city, and while it is largely Negro, it is predominantly middle class. For a number of years the parish has produced an impressive group of converts. Recently, Father Robert Humitz, the assistant pastor, has been experimenting with the format and content of the inquiry class and has worked out an interesting approach to adult catechesis. He was dissatisfied with the traditional inquiry procedures because they did not seem to meet the needs of his audience. So, he made some adaptations and provided for a larger measure of lay participation and group discussion.

Basically his program consists of the following:

1. A "Pre-Instruction" Period. This is really an introduction to the Church and the parish catechumenate. It consists of seven or eight sessions in which the inquirer meets the priest and the lay catechists and is introduced to the prayer and worship of the Church. The first and last of these meetings are more Church socials than instructions. During them Father Humitz personally interviews each inquirer in private. At the same time the rest of the class are getting to know one another and the lay catechists over refreshments. Thereafter, two evenings are devoted to a tour of the church, and three more to the Mass prayers and hymns. At the end of

this period, the inquirers are at home in the parish and able to join in the liturgy.

2. *The Catechumenate Proper.* The bulk of formal instruction takes place here. It consists of approximately 22 to 26 sessions once a week for an hour and a half. (This is over and above the "pre-instruction" period). The approach is basically salvation history, with a special effort to relate the content of the Kerygma to the Church's liturgy. One innovation lies in the substantial amount of time allotted to class discussion. The presentation by the priest-instructor takes about thirty minutes and is followed by approximately forty-five minutes of group discussion among the inquirers under the guidance of lay catechists. To encourage this, the room is so arranged that the inquirers sit around tables in groups of seven or eight during the entire session. Thus, from the very beginning they find themselves in a natural position for discussion.

3. *The Stages of Baptism.* Father Humitz has just begun to integrate the baptismal liturgy into the catechumenate. Since the "pre-instruction" is scheduled to begin each year in September, by the time Lent arrives the catechumen is pretty well along and can begin to receive his baptism in stages. The weekly session during Lent will be built around the liturgy of baptism as the catechumens go through the different stages of the sacrament. In addition, in order that the parish as a whole may become more involved in the catechumenate, this weekly baptismal liturgy will be made the parish Lenten devotion. The catechumenate proper then winds up at the Easter Vigil, at which time the catechumens complete their baptism.

4. *The Post-Catechumenate.* From Easter to Pentecost there follows a period of preparation for confirmation. The emphasis here is on the Christian life, and the text used is the Acts of the Apostles with its illustration of the influence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

EMPHASIS ON THE LITURGY . . .

As far as content is concerned, Father Humitz lays a great deal of stress upon the liturgy. He also spends a good deal of time

on the Old Testament, as he believes that the history of the Israelites is very meaningful to Negroes. The structure for discussion here aims at having the catechumens relate the events of Old Testament salvation history to its liturgy. Thus, the class is well prepared for the central place of the Mass and the sacraments when they reach the New Testament.

Father Humitz reports that within a very short time after the course begins the catechumens are caught up in discussion and make a real contribution toward the class understanding of the material. Their insights very often point up a relevance to contemporary life of certain features of Christianity that says far more than some of the more standardized applications we priests are apt to make.

SOMETHING FOR THE CHILDREN . . .

A neat little arrangement is appended to the catechumenate by providing simultaneous religious instruction for the children of inquirers. It is not uncommon in this type of parish to see whole families received into the Church at one time. This means that the children have to be prepared, too. This necessary preparation takes place in an adjoining room during the weekly meeting. The baby sitter problem is thus solved and the arrangement works wonders towards keeping up attendance as well as introducing the children of new Catholics to the faith which they are soon to embrace.

FUTURE PROSPECTS . . .

Like most catechists, Father Humitz is not entirely satisfied with what he is doing, and is constantly striving to perfect it. I don't suppose any of us will ever be completely satisfied with the content of our catechesis, but some real improvements can and are being made which will bring home to new Catholics much of the best teaching of Vatican II. The concern of Father Humitz and others like him, together with their experiments in relating instruction to liturgy, can be a great step forward. Also, the growing emphasis on lay participation in adult catechesis holds great promise.

A WORRISOME STATISTIC . . .

The Austrian Pastoral Institute recently reported that for every two persons converted to the Catholic faith in Austria in 1963, five Catholics left the Church. Statistics of this kind are not notably reliable as there is no official record for departing Catholics and such figures can only be estimates. However, assuming the rough

accuracy of the proportion, there is no reason to think that conditions in America make a lesser fall-away here likely. Certainly, one pastoral conclusion from this is that our 'conversion' effort must be aimed as much, if not more, at Catholics as non-Catholics. The kind of commitment that modern catechetics seeks to elicit from the non-believer must also be coaxed from great many nominal Catholics. This means that the kind of adult catechesis that is recommended today cannot be limited to non-Catholic inquirers but has to reach the mass of Sunday Catholics, too. Somehow it must figure in our preaching to the whole parish. Vatican II has already presented pastors with an enormous educational task and it is encouraging to note the efforts that many dioceses are making to provide them with the necessary material in the form of sermon outlines and homilies.

For those who wish to go into the whole matter of pulpit catechesis in a more systematic way, Catholic University has just announced a workshop on the renewal of scriptural and liturgical preaching to be held June 10-21. This workshop is under the joint sponsorship of the School of Theology and the Speech and Drama Department and . . . "is intended to help the parish priest deliver his Sunday sermons according to the mind of Second Vatican Council and its new Decree on the Liturgy."

The program is arranged in small group sessions so that each participant will have the opportunity to speak and receive instructions for improvement from his peers and professional teachers of speech. Application should be made before May 27 to Catholic University.

A FOOTNOTE TO UNITY WEEK . . .

During the Christian Unity Octave in Birmingham, England, collections for the poor were taken up on Sunday in neighboring Catholic and Methodist churches and afterward were exchanged as an expression of good will. This gesture was in line with a suggestion made a few years ago by Oscar Cullman, the great Protestant Scripture scholar. Professor Cullman was thinking of St. Paul's practice of sharing collections among his churches as a means of unity and suggested this practice as a step toward mutual charity among separated Christians. Sometimes one small tangible act like this one in Birmingham represents more real progress in Christian Unity than acres of theological writing and dialogue. Here is an ecumenical activity that lies within the reach of all.

JOSEPH V. GALLAGHER, C.S.P.



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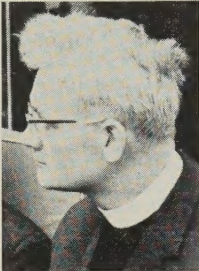
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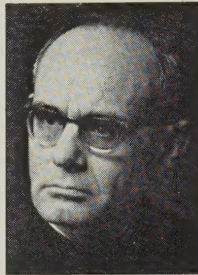
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